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Security Council

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Letter dated 1 October 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward to you a concept note for the Security Council open debate on women and peace and security, which will be held on 13 October 2015 (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Román **Oyarzun**

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Annex to the letter dated 1 October 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

High-level review of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000): from rhetoric to effective results

Open debate of the Security Council

13 October 2015

The open debate will be chaired by the Prime Minister of Spain, Mariano Rajoy.

The Secretary-General will deliver a statement at the beginning of the open debate.

Briefers:

- Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka
- Director of Fonds pour les femmes congolaises and President of the Administration Board of Solidarité féminine pour la paix et le développement intégral, Julienne Lusenge
- President of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq, Yanar Mohammed

Some 15 years ago, the Security Council adopted resolution 1325 (2000), drawing attention to the differing impact of armed conflict on women and girls, their exclusion from conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and the inextricable links between gender equality and international peace and security. The thematic resolution was adopted following a decade of peacekeeping failures in Rwanda, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia. It was the result of the active mobilization of women's groups globally after the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, and the strong determination of some of the then members of the Council.

The world has seen significant changes since 2000. In less than a decade, the number of major violent conflicts has almost tripled (see A/70/357-S/2015/682, para. 2). The nature of conflict has also changed:[1] cycles of fragility and insecurity have become entrenched in many regions; the interconnections between natural disasters, humanitarian crises and conflicts are more visible; and the number of refugees and internally displaced persons is higher than ever before in the Organization's history, with many of them expected to remain displaced for almost

[1] Both the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture have referred to the changing face of global conflict. The growing threat posed by violent extremism and terrorism adds another layer to the already-complex global and regional conflict scenario (see A/70/95-S/2015/446, paras. 8, 12 and 80, and A/69/968-S/2015/490, annex, paras. 10, 11, 14, 19 and 53).

two decades, the current average length of displacement. All of this is also affected by new and emerging threats, the most prominent of which is the rise of violent extremism and terrorism, perhaps the greatest threat to global peace and security at present.

Since 2000, we have also witnessed various positive developments, such as the creation of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the appointment of special representatives of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict and for children and armed conflict. The responses of the Security Council and the Organization have also shifted over the period. Perhaps most significantly, the gradual consideration of violations of human rights and humanitarian law as being threats to international peace and security has created new spaces for the Council to engage across the main pillars of United Nations activity.

With regard to women and peace and security specifically, six resolutions have followed resolution 1325 (2000). Together, the seven resolutions elevate the importance of women's participation and leadership in all aspects of peace and security, recognize sexual violence in conflict as a threat to international security and an impediment to peacebuilding and create obligations for United Nations actors and Member States to both empower and protect women and girls in conflict-affected contexts.

The year 2015 is a decisive year for United Nations efforts with regard to both gender equality and peace and security. We have just celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and recently launched a new development agenda for the coming 15 years. In addition to the current review of resolution 1325 (2000), an emblematic resolution, through this open debate and a global study on its implementation, we have reviewed the Organization's peace operations and peacebuilding architecture. The convergence of the three processes provides an invaluable opportunity to develop a holistic approach to conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding by, among other things, ensuring the participation and leadership of women across all areas and stages of response.[2] The reviews will also be complemented by the outcome of the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit and by the plan of action that the Secretary-General will announce in the next weeks, containing practical measures to prevent violent extremism. The high-level review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and the global study that will inform it provide an invaluable opportunity to reflect on the current status of the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and to make specific and ambitious commitments to its full realization.

Diagnosis

In conducting a brief overview of the women and peace and security agenda since it was taken up by the Security Council as a separate thematic issue in 2000, we have come to the general conclusions set out below.

[2] As the Secretary-General stated in October 2010, "advancing the cause of women, peace and security must be integral to our peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, not an afterthought".

The Security Council has established a relatively robust normative framework on women and peace and security.[3] There remains, however, an implementation gap at Headquarters[4] and, above all, on the ground. In practice, priority is not accorded to the protection and participation of women. Instead, this is often seen as an add-on and non-political component, rather than as a critical aspect of the peace and security equation for both women and men, as well as for society as a whole.

The most challenging gap that remains concerns the participation of women in peace processes and post-conflict political transitions, even as empirical evidence reveals a strong connection between the inclusion of women in peace processes and more durable and stable peace. Participation issues should be systematically tackled together with the protection issues and recognized as mutually reinforcing. We can affirm that the Security Council has rarely acted to proactively prevent conflict.[5] Investing in participation has a strong impact on prevention.

Even if the normative framework created by the Security Council since 2000 is broad, there are areas that have not been addressed directly in resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security, including emerging threats such as the role of women in countering violent extremism and terrorism.[6] While the use of rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage and other forms of sexual violence has been identified as part of the strategic objectives, ideology and funding of extremist groups such as ISIS in parts of the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq and Boko Haram in Nigeria (see S/2015/203, para. 83), analysis of the role of women as victims of a broad range of rights violations at the hands of extremists, and equally their role as perpetrators, agents of prevention and response, as well as of populations affected by both terrorism and counter-terrorism strategies, remains inadequately addressed. As such, the women and peace and security agenda has not been adequately integrated into the response of the international community to this threat.

The failure to allocate sufficient resources, the lack of political will, accountability and available expertise and persistent attitudes of resistance by

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[3] Following the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the Security Council adopted no resolutions on women and peace and security until 2008. Between 2008 and 2010, the Council had an extraordinary level of normative activity in that field, adopting resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010). It later adopted two other resolutions: 2106 (2013) and 2122 (2013).

[4] In this regard, the gains made with regard to the conflict-related sexual violence agenda since the creation of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and the strengthened implementation architecture both in the field and with the advent of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, represent a critical advance.

[5] The importance of prevention in general terms is also underlined in the 2015 report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2015/716, paras. 66 ff). In addition, the Secretary-General notes that, at the rhetorical level, there is strong support for early warning and conflict prevention, but this is not always translated into early action (see A/70/357-S/2015/682, para. 34).

[6] There are few references to the integration of a gender perspective into countering violent extremism and terrorism. The Security Council made a commitment to integrating women and peace and security into other thematic issues, such as counter-terrorism, in resolution 2122 (2013). There are also some vague references in resolution 2129 (2013), in resolution 2178 (2014) (with the rise of groups such as ISIS and Boko Haram), resolution 2195 (2014) (on the role of transnational organized crime in supporting terrorism) and 2199 (2015) (on illicit funding sources for ISIS and the Nusrah Front).

gatekeepers and decision makers are among the main reasons why this agenda has not been effectively implemented since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000).

Main actors

Although the women and peace and security agenda stems from the Security Council, it projects its impact towards the entire membership of the United Nations, the United Nations system and civil society. The Council should strengthen its role in being accountable for its own decisions on women and peace and security, but regional organizations, the entire United Nations system and, above all, Member States also have their own responsibility to address the challenges faced by this agenda. Addressing the challenges is the main goal of the open debate.

While the Security Council established the normative foundations for the agenda, it is not an implementing arm of the United Nations system and cannot be expected to achieve the required outcomes in isolation or without high-quality information and analysis. Implementation also requires significant commitment and action by the broader United Nations system, Member States and civil society.

The United Nations system as a whole, and in particular the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UN-Women as the lead on women and peace and security matters, should improve its general performance with regard to the agenda by, among other measures, providing analytical and strategic information to the Council on the situation on the ground and by further engaging with civil society, including women's organizations, at the local level. Strengthened collaboration and synergies between peace operations and United Nations country teams are needed, so as to maximize the comparative advantages of each. Stronger determination on the part of the senior leadership of the United Nations, both at Headquarters and on the ground, is required to effectively deliver on women and peace and security responsibilities.

The Security Council must also strengthen its own commitment to the effective implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. The Council should review its working methods in this regard in order to enhance its performance.

Member States bear the primary responsibility for ensuring that global commitments and obligations in relation to women and peace and security are integrated into national policies and laws. They remain the most influential actors in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) as States Members of the United Nations and members of regional organizations, but also in their role as parties to conflict, as donors, as troop and police contributors to peacekeeping operations or as political players in a specific conflict or region. In that regard, it should be underlined that cases of sexual exploitation and abuse endanger the image, legitimacy and effectiveness of the United Nations presence in the field. The Secretary-General has outlined some specific and strong measures to further implement the Organization's zero-tolerance policy,[7] but better follow-up and investigation also require cooperation on the part of Member States, in particular troop-contributing countries.

[7] See A/69/779, A/70/95-S/2015/446, paras. 257-262, and A/70/357-S/2015-682, paras. 119-125.

Regional organizations also have a crucial role to play in the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda. Since the tenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), there have been important efforts by regional and subregional organizations to monitor progress, evaluate results and share good practices in the implementation of the agenda.

Last, but not least, members of civil society have been key actors from the outset of the agenda. They are partners and beneficiaries, and more effective ways to systematically engage with civil society organizations at the local level and to empower women's organizations must be found to bridge the gap between international policies and local realities.

Challenges and goals of the high-level review

Among the key challenges facing the women and peace and security agenda are the lack of consistent implementation (see A/70/95-S/2015/446, para. 257), the lack of accountability and the lack of adequate gender-related resources and financing. The open debate and the high-level review afford us an extraordinary opportunity to show that the United Nations and its Member States can promote the cultural shift that the agenda is demanding on the occasion of its fifteenth anniversary. Implementation requires genuine commitment by national leaders,[8] but also by the leadership of the United Nations and regional organizations. It also demands strong determination and support from the financial perspective at the international, national and local levels.

In the light of the foregoing, we encourage:

(a) Member States to go beyond rhetoric by announcing, on the occasion of the high-level review, precise, ambitious and time-bound national commitments in such areas as women's leadership and participation in decision-making, the development and implementation of national action plans, funding allocations, the security and rule of law sectors, countering violent extremism and terrorism, and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction;

(b) Member States that have gone or are going through peace processes to share their good practices and achievements relating to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, given that their case studies would be useful for other countries;

(c) The United Nations system to announce specific, ambitious and time-bound commitments in areas such as accountability and reporting; gender architecture, expertise and resourcing; women's participation; and protection, conflict-related sexual violence and sexual exploitation and abuse, so as to demonstrate that the Secretariat and the entire United Nations system effectively prioritize the agenda;

(d) Regional organizations to share information on their own women and peace and security architecture, the communication channels established with civil society, their ways to monitor and report on the progress in the implementation of

[8] The High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations underlines that the lack of national leadership in making the women and peace and security agenda a national political and governance priority is the main impediment to the implementation of the agenda (see A/70/95-S/2015/446, para. 257).

the agenda and how they envisage closer cooperation between regional organizations and the United Nations;

(e) The Security Council to consider how it can improve its performance on a daily basis, not only through a more coherent and systematic approach to its thematic agenda items (women and peace and security, protection of civilians, sexual violence in conflict, children and armed conflict or countering terrorism), but also through its country-specific items, given that solutions should be tailored to the specific context.

Participation, briefers and outcome

The open debate will be chaired by the Prime Minister of Spain, Mariano Rajoy. The Secretary-General is expected to attend and make a statement at the beginning of the debate. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, will present the conclusions of the Secretary-General in his 2015 report on women and peace and security (S/2015/716). Yanar Mohammed (Iraq) and Julienne Lusenge (Democratic Republic of the Congo) will provide a briefing on behalf of civil society.

We encourage all participants to deliver concise but strong and focused statements, lasting no longer than three minutes, so that everyone can contribute to and interact in the review of resolution 1325 (2000). Longer statements can be sent in advance to highlevelreviewwps@unwomen.org and will be published on the UN-Women web page, together with the present concept note.

An outcome document of this high-level review is expected.